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SIBLING BONDING AND OTHER VALUE STRUCTURES IN THE *ERIHIA* OF SILANG, CAVITE

Rosella Moya-Torrecampo

Abstract

The *erihia* is a genre of folklore in Silang, Cavite that relates to both folk speech and to practices. I hope to present an initial, working definition and description of the concept from the point of view of the Silang folks, beginning with the exploration of the lexical variations in form and meaning of the word itself, especially as its local definition as speech that is part of folk wisdom connotes 'heritage,' whereas its definition as a Spanish loan word is 'heresy.' Using a Structuralist approach, the discussion will analyze the significance of the *erihia* within the social formation it exists in. The *erihia* of Silang are reflective of values that center on kinship systems based on the binary relations between and among Self/others, others being defined as those including family, neighbors, friends, strangers, enemies, the old, the young, males, females, etc. The *erihia*, in so defining the roles of these participants in the social formation, make the oppositions between good and bad, life and death, near and far, familiar and strange, indigenous and colonial come to play. Among examples presented, the *erihia* for sibling bonding which is indigenous and still practiced by members of the social group is given value as it concretizes how kinship structures are established, maintained, and valued in local Silang society.

Keywords: folk speech and practices, folklore, heritage, heresy, values, kinship structures

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The Topic

“*Erihiya*,” as it is used in Silang, is a compendium of age-old wisdom to live by. The *erihya* of Silang are reflective of values that center on kinship systems and systems of exchange based on the binary relations between and among Self/others, others being those identified in widening circles and degrees of closeness or distance from the self as ethos and locus. ‘Others’ include family, neighbor, friend, stranger, enemy, old, young, male, female, etc.; and in so defining the roles of these participants in the social formation, the oppositions between good and bad, life and death, near and far, familiar and strange, indigenous and colonial come to play. I would like to make the recommendation that the *erihya* be studied in order that more samples may come to light; a more structured cataloguing be made; the extent of practice not only within Silang but in other provinces of Cavite be explored; and the relationship among the *erihya* and narrative and other forms of folk literature be determined, so that ultimately, the niche of the *erihya* in Philippine folklore can be established.

The situ of the research is Silang. One of the upland towns of Cavite, it is located approximately forty-four kilometers south of Metro Manila, and well within the economically defined Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon (CALABARZON) area. Forty *barrios* and five *barangays* [hamlets and villages, respectively] constitute the town. Silang’s nearest neighbors are the towns of Dasmariñas and Carmona, in the north; Amadeo in the west; Tagaytay City in the south; and Sta. Rosa and Cabuyao, Laguna in the east. Time was when Silang made up one-third of the whole province of Cavite, making it, at certain periods in local history, the largest town of Cavite. (See Fig. 1: Map of Silang town and its *barrios*)¹. It is within this local social structure that the *erihya* has existed as a significant function from the earlier times to the present.

The critical approach I am applying, as delineated in Claude Levi-Strauss’ *The Structural Study of Myth* attempts to show how individual elements are structured, and how the meaning of each can only be construed out of the relation of the elements to one another. It searches for general properties of social life by examining underlying forms of relationships within a given structure by deducing how structures are governed by transformations, enabling the comparison of structures as wholes. Structuralist analysis recognizes the fact that differing structures are brought together by virtue of oppositions for which an order is sought. The network of oppositions

constitutes a structure analogous to mythemes which are, according to Levi-Strauss, “A bundle of relations’ that acquire a signifying function (Saussure, in Lane, 1970, p. 35).”²

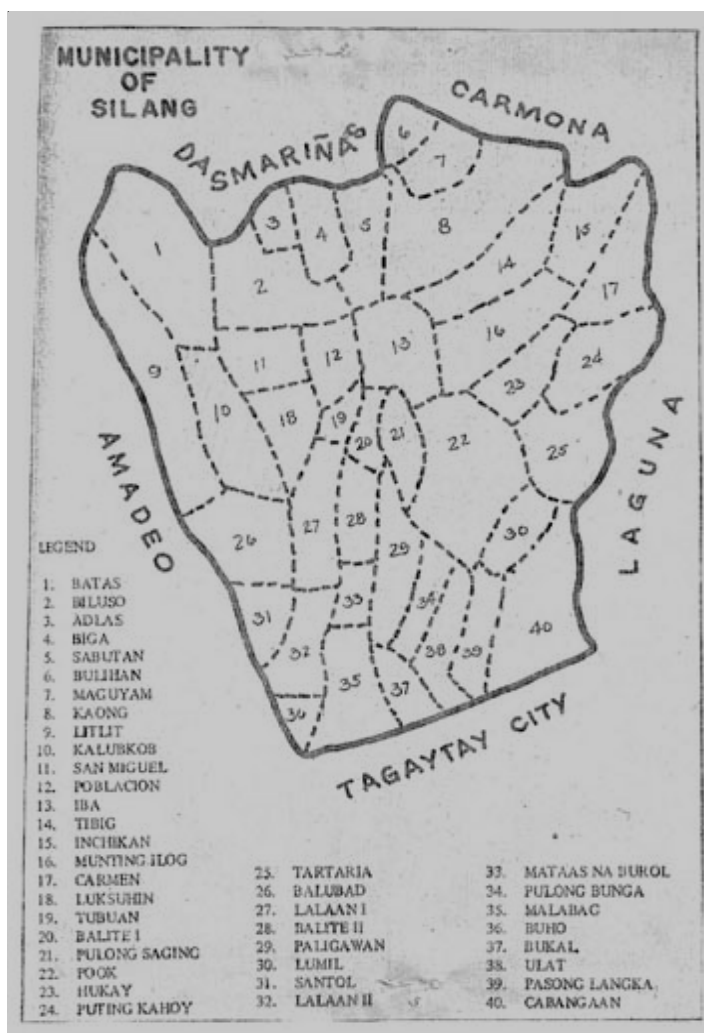


Figure 1: Map of Silang and its *Barrios* (from Moya, 1991).

‘Heresy’ / ‘Heritage’: the *Erihiya* as a linguistic element in the Silang Lexicon

I first learned about the *erihya* as a student on a first fieldwork assignment; quite a number of the more senior informants I had interviewed brought up the term in the course of their many long, meandering reminiscences. What had struck me then was the fact that although I took pride in being a member of Silang’s social formation, familiar with the course of its day-to-day life, participating in its more popular rituals, and professing to understand at least the overt meanings of these, it was only at that juncture that I had been able to give a name to what had likely ordered my early existence. What had surprised me then was the fact that my very own elders have long known of the term, “*erihya*,” its meaning and what this whole body of lore comprises; that they believed in and complied with these prescriptions; yet I had never heard them use, until then, the word to define and refer to their practices and beliefs.

What also had seemed significant to me at that time was the fact that I had had an altogether different definition for the word, one I had picked up from previous lessons in the mandated undergraduate Spanish classes and that was totally the opposite of how this meaning has evolved and is used within the Silang context. In Spanish, “*erihya*” is not at all to be associated with anything that merits social approbation. From a scholarly perspective, the etymology of the word “*erihya*” is the Spanish term “*herejia*” meaning a belief, practice, or view contrary to established doctrine, dogma, philosophy or science—in short, a heresy. One who believes or promotes an *herejia* is an *hereje* or heretic.

The term *erihya* (as well as its derivative, *erehe*), is a loan word from Spanish, and as most loan words have, has long acquired the status of being a “naturalized” part of the native language.³ Neither does the term appear in the Tagalog lexicons of Jose V. Panganiban, considered as among the standards or scholarly references of Tagalog lexicography and orthography.⁴ The Silang usage of “*erihya*” is in variance with the responses from other Tagalogs or other Tagalog-speaking people, including those from other towns of Cavite, who usually associate the word with its dictionary meaning or with the other more common derivation, *erehe* which means “heretic.”⁵ However, the Silang folk apparently do not ascribe to the idea that *erehiya* came from either *herencia* or *herejia*. In fact, given the suggestion that the Tagalog term “*erehe*” [heretic] could be related to the word *erehiya*, the older folks, whom we expect to be more aware of Spanish cultural antecedents given the context

of the sociocultural and political history they have lived through, respond by vigorously dissociating the meaning of the two terms. (The response of Caviteño informants not from Silang, however, is to make an almost instantaneous association between “*erehe*” and “*erehiya*.”)

In dictionaries published later on, the term appears. For instance, in Pedro Serrano Laktaw’s *Diccionario Hispano-Tagalog* the term appears as “*erehia*” under the keyword “*heretico*,” which is given this meaning “*ang nauukol sa erehia o hereje* (Serrano Laktaw, 1965, p. 289)”, i.e., ‘that which pertains to heresy or heretics.’ *Diksiyunaryong Pilipino-Pilipino* by Ligaya Buenaventura (1982) defines “*erehiya*” as “*paniniwalaan at tinatanggap ng Simbahan, paaralan o propesyon*” [‘belief contrary to what the Church, school, or profession believes and accepts’] (p. 137). In *The New Vicassin’s English-Filipino Dictionary*, the term “*erehiya*” appears to be defined simply as “heresy,” with the annotation that its etymology is Spanish (Santos & Santos, 1995, p. 552). The *Collins Diccionario Espanol-Ingles, Ingles-Espanol* is to be noted, for the English equivalent it provides for terms are given usages specific to the countries in which Spanish is or was used. Among its entries is the term “*herejia*” which is literally translated as “heresy.” But of more interest to this study is the fact that, according to this dictionary, in the Philippines, the word is also supposed to be used figuratively to mean “a silly remark or a stupid thing” (Collins, 1971, p. 236, emphasis added).

In these entries, no cross-reference is made between the terms “folklore” and “*erihya*” nor of folklore as being a set of beliefs considered heretical. The position I am taking is that, though “*erihya*” is a Tagalog word originally adapted from the Spanish “*herejia*,” the meaning given to it by the Silang locals is one that is operational only within the town and to an extent, perhaps only within a very limited area of upland Cavite.⁶ At the basic level, the “*erihya*” may thus be valued as a lexical construct actively functioning within the linguistic paradigm of the Silang variant of Tagalog. It has a privileged meaning in Silang.

The apparent contradiction shown in the values assigned to *erihya* and its root, *herejia*, is one that shows mediation by Silang society, so much so that the word “*erehiya*” gains the positive meaning of traditional, fail-safe prescriptions, not heresies. Ascribing to these practices is encouraged and is a matter of conforming to what the whole group approves of and upholds as a way of life. To believe in and practice *erihya* is to affirm one’s place in the group and ensure the continuity of the society’s traditions, contrary to what

a heretic is supposed to be and to do. Certainly, contrary even to Collins' culturally specific definition earlier referred to, *erihya* cannot be considered in Silang as stupid nor as silly things to say and do.

In the attempt to further mediate between the values of *erihya* and its root word, an alternative explanation regarding the possible etymology and derivation arose, but from an erstwhile outsider to Silang society, who suggested that *erihya* could be a word that arose from the corruption of "*herencia*" a Spanish word later on incorporated in the lexicon of some of the languages of the Visayan islands (Joseph Torrecampo, personal communication, October 1997). *Herencia* is supposed to denotatively mean "inheritance, estate, legacy." At this point, it is interesting to note that if, indeed, "*herencia*" is the root from which "*erihya*" was derived, then it is the connotative, and not necessarily the denotative meaning of both words that come into play. Connotatively, it takes on the meaning of 'heritage' (Collins, 1971, p. 236). In a very similar manner, in Silang *erihya* is connotatively supposed to be the local heritage, the wealth of lore. It is supposed to be the invaluable legacy of wisdom and experience that one inherits from the elders. In local terms, the *erihya* is supposed to be "*kawikaan ng matatanda*" or "*kagawian/kaugalian ng matatanda*" ['the words of the elders', 'the ways of the elders'].

The instance of reciting or recalling an *erihya* is almost always prefaced by the formulaic opening, "*ayon sa matatanda...*" or "*ang sabi ng matatanda...*" ['according to the elders'/ 'as the elders say']. This formulaic opening is used even by the very senior informants who still bother to distinguish themselves from those whom they see as a much older generation, in comparison with whom they constitute the 'younger set.' With this older generation and the 'youngest' generation, they form links in the chain of oral transmission. The value of the *erihya* is that of traditionally handed down information, with the old folks situating themselves as mediators or transmitters of a knowledge base that antedates them. Traditionally, wisdom is considered as more valuable and lasting than any other material inheritance and, therefore, as the true bequest, it is, in the words of the elders, best expressed as the cultural heritage itself, given the local value of "*ang tanging kayamanang maipamamana sa inyo*" [the only material inheritance/wealth that can be bequeathed to heirs].

That the Silang folks do not seem to see the negatively valued *herejia* nor even the positively valued *herencia* as the likely sources of "*erihya*" may be explained in two ways. One, following an extreme position, these Spanish

words really were not the source of the Tagalog word. And two, following the view I am more inclined to take, the change in meaning of *herencia* or *herejia* happened in so distant a past so much so that given the predominantly oral mode of transmission in earlier times, such an instance of language change was easily, if not eventually, forgotten. From the structural perspective used in this analysis, such a ‘corruption’ is not to be seen in a negative light but as a transformation, an act of resolving the contradictions to come up with a new meaning, that allows society to function and survive by ‘patching up’ as it were, its social fabric to create the still recognizable pattern in which the erstwhile rents rendered by incursive elements become virtually indiscernible, if not reworked, in a manner that becomes unrecognizable as part of the modified motif. Either that, or given that the coinage was spontaneous, arising naturally out of common practice at that time, then such a coinage did not come to have a value of something ‘unnatural’ so as to be worthy of controversy; nor was it so novel a coinage that it had to be remembered as a ‘buzz word’ in those days and eventually throughout history. (After all, based on the mechanics of structuration, such mediations that occurred were not necessarily conscious acts, but more of subconscious ones.) In this sense, the word “*erehiya*” may thus be said to take on the altered **form** of the root “*herejia*” while taking on, as part of its **function**, the meaning of the word “*herencia*”—another evidence of transformation through mediation.

Regardless, what is significant now is that the notion is already established among the local folks that “*erihya*” is an original, indigenous word. Such a cooptation of the sign as original, chthonic, is the same act that gave the signified (the societal values and the functions of these) and signifier (the whole body of *erihya* as practices) the same value of being natural, practically innate, indigenous. The *erihya* as a sign is therefore established to be the local, oral collection of native wisdom transmitted from generation to generation in Silang.

As a sign, the signifier may remain essentially the same or become altered superficially, as the many spelling variants show; but what is more important is that what it signifies now takes on a positive value, radically shifting diachronically away from the usual, prevalent negative denotation that it has acquired in other Tagalog areas at large, including Cavite. *Erihiya*, as a vocabulary term of Silang Tagalog, is characterized by peculiarities of a form that is fluid, being largely a part of oral rather than written discourse—remaining largely arbitrary in form, having many spelling variants, operating as parole. *Erihiya* is a word that, although used either as singular or plural,

does not undergo a change in form. Literate Silang informants, when asked to spell out the word, produce the following variations:

erihya, erehya, irihya, eriya, ereya, iriya, eriya, erihia, erehia, irihia.

The more common spellings are the first two in the list.⁷

Likewise, the stress on the word varies, so that accent falls on a syllable depending on how the user syllabicates the word according to the phonetics of a favored spelling. Generally, the word could be pronounced with the accent falling either on the second or third (penultimate) syllable. Thus, the term could sound, according to the first manner as:

*e-RI'-hi-ya / e-RE'-hi-ya/ i-RI'-hi-ya/ e-RI'-ya/ e-RE'-ya/
i-RI'-ya/ e-RIH'-ya/ e-REH'-ya*

Or it could be pronounced according to the latter manner as:

e-ri-HI'-ya/ e-re-HI'-ya/ i-ri-HI'-ya

In Silang, the preferred pronunciation is the one with accent falling on the second syllable. Regardless of whether accent falls on the second or the third syllable, the word is generally pronounced in keeping with a penultimate level syllabic stress called *malumanay* in Tagalog.

It is evident that the established orthography and meaning of “*herejia*” in Silang were supplanted by a preferred spelling and meaning, thereby constituting a function. The deep structure is also affected, for even as the meaning of *erehya* in general Tagalog use remains essentially unchanged from the Spanish (meaning, there are areas which use the standard loan word definition, and it is still a standard loan word denotation to use “heresy” for “*herejia*,”), there are alterations in signification that arise, since the new term now has to operate according to the rules of the new language that has incorporated it. It also has to operate according to a new inventory of words that are interrelated according to the established lexical functions in the paradigm of the new language. A clear example of this is how *erihya*, as a word, now takes on a new, added meaning according to Tagalog usage alone, i.e., “a stupid thing or silly remark.”⁸

When the pocket culture of Silang adapts the term “*erehiya*,” the etymological meaning of “*erehiya*” is negated in favor of a new meaning. The shift in meaning that occurs results in a localism that has a meaning suited to, legitimized by, and made operant according to their local worldview, even if such a cooptation had been arbitrarily established, i.e., regardless of other Tagalogs’ or other cultures’ use of the lexis. Why then, did Silang society use the term *erhiya* as its label for the group’s revered traditions and local cultural heritage? Was this not a contradiction in terms—literally?

When the Spanish *conquistadores* settled in the Philippines and established Catholicism as the official religion, they considered all indigenous practices as heresies, in so far as these went against the teachings of the newly established Church. As a response, the people who became indoctrinated in the Catholic faith still held on to their native values, beliefs, practices, and traditions, even if covertly. Overtly, they were taking in new elements introduced by the conquering culture. In due time, the native blended with the Spanish. The result was the establishment of a set of traditions that might be considered unique to the locale because these could no longer be identified as belonging solely to one culture area, either purely Spanish or purely Tagalog. The compromise or mediation in the practice of native traditions and the new religion in daily living, this blend of Christian dogma and “paganism,” is what we have now come to know as “folk Catholicism.”⁹

The same conditions could have been at play in the case of Silang. The clergy, which first ‘founded’ the town and which had a great influence on its people, owing to the many years of the ascendancy of its socio-moral and political-economic administration, immediately labeled the set of native beliefs which the people had long practiced as heresies. It is also likely that from the pulpit, the clergy denounced and tried to dissuade the natives from adhering to such practices. Presumably, the people, in an act of mediation through both accommodation and cultural assertion which would both result in survival of the social formation, on the surface accepted the negative label (heresies/*herejia*) given to their indigenous value system; while deep within the formation, the value they gave their native traditions was definitely not a negative value.

What they continued to assert, albeit covertly, was to them its true, positive worth. In a further act of mediation, the Catholic practices which had a parallel function and which took on the same significance as those values already established in the indigenous social fabric were integrated as manifestations, albeit in different forms, of such long-entrenched values.

These mediations occurred in a manner that those adopted Catholic beliefs and practices that were in consonance with native traditions, were also labeled as *erihya*. In time, the term and its original meaning underwent a transformation so that the references, as well as the distinctions between Indigenous/catholic and Heresy/dogma became blurred.

With the indigenization of the form, the negative value was dropped and transformed into a positive value. Such binary oppositions between Catholic/pagan, Dogma/heresy, Good/bad were suspended in an act of mediation. This mediated opposition between Heresy/dogma is the function of the sign, “*erihya*.” *Erihiya*, in so transforming into a ‘nativized’ word not identical with *herejia* in both form and meaning, becomes the very function that communicates the value that its reference (the body of native traditions and beliefs) cannot be viewed by the local populace as a heresy. Rather, it is a privileged sign with an equally privileged function. It is at this juncture when that which was once “heretical” or formerly ‘the profane’ becomes ‘the sacred.’

***Erihiya*: A descriptive analysis of form and function**

Tagalog lexicons make a distinction among terms used to classify folklore forms, to wit:

Folklore – <i>alamat; kuwentong bayan</i>
Folktale – <i>kuwentong bayan</i>
Household saying – <i>kasabihan; sabihan; rebran; wikain</i> <i>sawikain; salawikain; kawikaan; tanaga</i>
Proverb – <i>kasabihan; kawikaan; salawikain</i>
Folk wisdom – <i>katutubong dunong</i>
Magic – <i>hiwaga; salamangka (Sp.); mahiya (Sp); madyik (Eng);</i> <i>gayuma</i>
Superstition – <i>pamahiin</i>
Spell – <i>bulong; orasyon (Sp.); balani; gayuma</i>

(Santos & Santos, 1995, pp. 459, 743, 1269, 1337, 1575; Cf Panganiban, 1972, pp. 262, 683, 762, 740).

The standard Silang Tagalog synonym for the term “*erihya*” is not a choice among the above terms. An equivalent term according to the Silang variant of Tagalog must include all. As practiced and regarded locally, no distinction is made among these various types of folk wisdom or folk lore.

This is already a point of difference between Silang use and general Tagalog use, for in the latter, recognizable characteristics in both form and content or function usually serve to academically categorize the types as distinct from each.¹⁰

As expected of Silang's distinct use of the word "*erihya*," such a special regard (i.e., used in a manner apart from common Tagalog use) also applies to varied types of folk speech, most of which are categorized in Silang's local use as types of *erihya*. An example is the use of the word *pamahiin*—the whole set of, or individual traditional practices often glossed over by non-participants as "superstitious beliefs"—which make up the majority of *erihya* collected in this study. *Erihya*, however, resists being categorized in the Silang system as belonging just to the category of *pamahiin*. Normally, to call *erihya* as *pamahiin* would have been the automatic response of a greater Tagalog or even Filipino structuring mind, such categorization being in keeping with the already academic and thus, well-established classifications of folk speech. Initially, this was my attitude, when, upon being given examples by the folks for them to operationally define the word *erihya*, I right away concluded, "*A, mga pamahiin pala ang erihya* [Oh, so *erihya* are actually "superstitions"]," to which my now deceased grandmother replied in the negative, emphasizing that, "*Hindi laang*¹¹ *pamahiin* [Not just superstitions]." That was the telltale comment that told me that I was dealing with something bigger, if not something other than the accepted labels. In Silang, *erihya* do not belong to the set of *pamahiin*; neither are *erihya* to be treated as *pamahiin* alone. *Erihya* may include *pamahiin* as a subsumed type, but to say that *erihya* are mere *pamahiin* is to water down the former's function. Similarly, in Silang context, a *pamahiin* that belongs to the body of *erihya* can function to be more than just a *pamahiin*; it could have the value of a spell or *bulong*, for instance. Indeed, there is the implication that a distinction must be made for the term *erihya*, as it is to be defined in relation to all other types of folk literature.

Erihya as defined in Silang is either an isolated, specific practice or is a whole collection (or body) of the local folk's lore or wisdom¹². However, it is not a synonym of the all-encompassing term "folklore" itself, since the folks distinguish the *erihya* from narrative folk literature forms like the *alamat* [legend] or *kuwentong bayan* [folktale types]; and some poetic folk literature forms such as the *awiting bayan* [folk song] or the local *talalay* [work song] of Silang, both narrative and poetic types being genres falling under both the local and academic definition of the term "folklore." Eugenio's definition of

folklore in the broadest sense to include “all kinds of traditional knowledge of the folk: the oral literature, their arts and crafts, customs and beliefs, games and amusements, their magic and their ritual,” allows me to categorize the *erihya* initially as: a folklore form other than folk literature, which encompasses the traditional knowledge of the folk in areas such as arts, crafts, trade, customs, beliefs, games, amusements, magic and ritual (Eugenio, 1982, p. 1).

Wise sayings, proverbs, enigmas [*talinhaga*], spells [*orasyon* and *bulong*], which are traditionally folk speech forms are expressed in general Tagalog as declarative statements. The *erihya* is expressed usually in a declarative mood and structure, though it may occasionally take a poetic form the length of a couplet or a quatrain. The *erihya* may be considered as “folk speech” as its nearest gloss. Eugenio (1982) defines folk speech as a category of folk literature with the riddle and the proverb as its main types (pp. 11-17). The *erihya*, however, does not seem to manifest at all as these latter two forms. The *erihya*, therefore, though taking the form of oral discourse with a set pattern and function, is not yet necessarily classified academically as conforming fully to the folk speech as a type, and by extension, not necessarily belonging fully to oral or folk literature as a type. Nor can *erihya* be considered as comprehensively encompassing through its manifestations the whole concept of folklore. However, if I may legislate at this point, since the concept of *erihya* includes the whole set of beliefs, sayings, aphorisms, proverbs, taboos, prescriptions, superstitions, spells, magic, rituals and other allied forms, at this preliminary stage of the study, I am inclined to consider the *erihya* as a type under folk (and thus, oral) literature, that, because usually expressed according to a pattern considered as a general structure, can be rationalized as folk speech, taking on for its subject matter prescribed codes of behavior related to the experience of life itself—the human biological cycle, the view of the cosmos, the values system, social relationships, human activities, and human artifacts.

An individual *erihya* may appear to have no relation at all to another *erihya*, especially when each belongs to an area of human existence disparate from the other (for example, an *erihya* from the corpus of *erihya* on baptism versus an *erihya* from those pertaining to the body or *erihya* on wearing clothes). It thus creates the impression that the *erihya* is a collection of apparently discursive items of Silang folk's knowledge. In attempting to classify or categorize *erihya* according to subject or types, true to their paradigmatic and syntagmatic functions, the utterances cut across several

concerns, functioning as examples of the whole network of values, relations, activities, and other concerns of local life.¹³

However, there is a discernible underlying order and relation that would make the *erihya* a compendium of learning that is responsible for performing an expository role that articulates to its users the whole meaning of their existence within their known reality. *Erihiya* cannot be considered as discursive items, indeed. Rather, *erihya* are to be treated in the same way that Eugenio definitively treats folk speech—included in which are the proverbs and beliefs—as constituting non-discursive items in so far as these form a body of organized knowledge (Eugenio, personal communication, 1998).

Though the Silang folks assert that the forms that the *erihya* takes are varied, it appears that the *erihya* collected are mostly examples of what some at present have come unfortunately to label as “superstitious beliefs.” These beliefs are generally worded as prose or occasionally as poetry form; phrased as warnings or as pieces of advice. I am considering concise expressions that seem to be built on a principle of rhyme and meter as poetry forms, although since an *erihya* is expressed orally, I cannot really tell whether the sense of rhyme and rhythm occurs indeed as a matter of form, or as an accident occasioned by the choice of words of particular speakers, or as a predilection of Tagalog itself (Agoncillo, 1990, p. 17), which, as had been asserted by Rizal, has a natural tendency to be poetic. An example of this ‘poetic’ form of *erihya* is:

“*Huwag magtuturo, / baka ka manuno*”

(‘Don’t point around with your finger, lest arouse an elemental to anger’)

[free translation in poetic form mine]

From a structural standpoint, these utterances may be classified binarily as either taking on a negative or a positive function. For instance,

“*ay ang sabi ng matatanda, kakain ng matatamis ang bagong kasal pagnagpang-akyat na sa kabahayan,*”

(‘Oh, the elders say that the newlyweds should eat sweets as they go up the house together’)

is an illustration of the positive or affirmative function. Whereas,

“Huwag kang magpanuro sa pulo kapag kagat na ang dilim nang gayan,” (‘Don’t point around with your finger when you are out in the fields at dusk’)

is an illustration of the negative or negating function.

The *erihya* as utterance is usually patterned with the opening formula plus expression of lore/wisdom. As utterance, it can take on the following patterns:

Opening formula :

Ay, ang sabi ng matatanda

Ay, sabi ng matatanda

Ay, ayon sa mga nakatatanda

Ay, ayon sa mga matatanda

[all translated as, the elders say/according to the elders]

(+) *kailangan raw ay/dapat raw ay* [you need to/you must]
added for affirmatives

or

(+) *huwag raw/bawal daw* [you must not/ it is prohibited]
added for negatives

+ prescription for affirmatives

or

+ caution for negatives

For more emphatic forms, usually confined to the cautionary types (negations), the words “*huwag*” and “*bawal*” are repeated (“*huwag na huwag*” or “*bawal na bawal*”) and in place of the expletive “*ay*” the word “*nakow*” (so spelled to account for Silang local pronunciation of the Tagalog “*naku*”) is more often used, or both used (“*ay, nakow*”). [the term escapes translation] Sometimes, the syntax is modified, so that variant structures like the following arise:

Ay, ang sabi ng matatanda, kapag + dapat + prescription

Ay, nakow, ayon sa matatanda kapag + situation + huwag na huwag + caution

It is to be remembered that the opening formula “*Ay/nakow, ang sabi ng matatanda...*” or any of the formula’s variants prefaces the expression. The affirmatives take on an expository tone, whereas the negatives take on an

imperative tone. The negative or positive linguistic formula, which may be considered as the stem, now takes on affixation through the utterance that has a fixed form, with mere minor transformations (*sabi/ayon* or an added “*ay*”/ “*nakow*”/ “*ay nakow*”). This could be illustrated as follows:

<i>Ay, ang sabi ng matatanda</i>	+	<i>kakain ng matamis ang bagong kasal...</i>
(+ affixation)		(+ root)
<i>Nakow, ayon sa matatanda</i>	+	<i>Huwag kang magpanuro sa pulo</i>
(- affixation)		(- root)

The local culture’s paradigm of values, because it has given an overall positive value to the *erihya*, assigns *erihya* expressed in the negative manner also a positive value, as much as taking the caution to heart—that is, accepting what is negated as indeed something to steer clear from—also results in a positive status for the practitioner: safety, health, long life, etc.¹⁴ In the Silang *erihya* or even generally, in the dialect’s system, *nakow* apparently has become a signal for a negative utterance. Never is *nakow* used to signal a positive expression in the *erihya* samples gathered.

As a set of values, *erihya* can be subdivided according to the milestones and the activities comprising the human cycle, from birth to death and even beyond, into the suprahuman domain.

Random responses have already established that the term is peculiar to Silang. As a localism, it is not quite recognized in other provinces of Cavite. At this level of interpretation, it may be said that the *erihya* as a term has a usage limited to Silang and former territories, even as it is possible that certain practices have trickled down to other outlying areas, such as Indang or Imus, by virtue of proximity. (On the other side of Silang’s northern border is Dasmariñas, which was once a *sitio* of Imus. This shared instance between Silang’s and Dasmariñas’ local history then might help explain the connection between Imus’ and Silang’s common recognition of the *erihya*.) An informant from Imus, for instance, is aware of the practice involving “sibling bonding” even as she asserts that the term *erihya* is not used at all in Imus in the way that it is used in Silang; and that the ritual is not thus labeled as being an *erihya* in Imus (Leonora Fajutagana, personal communication, April 1997).

‘Sibling bonding’ is a ritual interpretation of the term “*kaputol*” or “*utol*” (cut from the same umbilical cord). The detailed discussion of this article’s core concept is what follows.

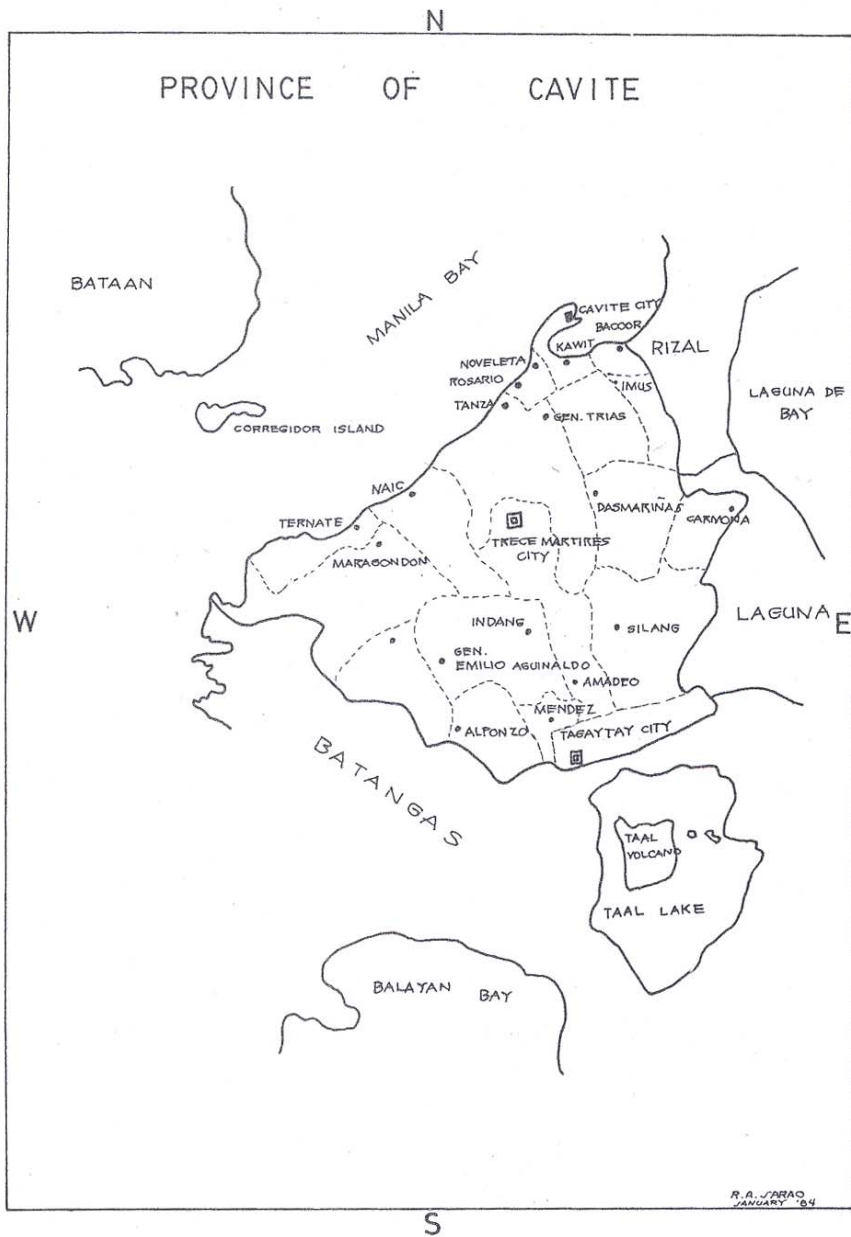


Figure 2: Silang and neighboring Cavite towns (from Saulo & de Ocampo, 1985, xxviii).

Utol / Kaputol: kinship structures and the erihya's transformation in the local culture

I have already established the role of the *erihya* as a linguistic mediator between indigenous and colonial culture. But how then does this mediating role manifest itself in actual cultural practice? Allow me to focus on what I consider as the most definitive practice from among the *erihya* of Silang. It is the practice of having siblings partake of one another's desiccated umbilical cord. I have labeled this as the ritual of "*kapatiran*" or "*pagiging magkaputol*," which means 'sibling bonding' or, literally, 'having been cut from the same' (umbilical cord). I have identified this practice as 'definitive' for reasons that: 1) this appears to be the unique or distinguishing practice in the locale of Silang and this does not appear to be a widespread Tagalog practice; 2) this appears to be the most indigenous practice, without an easily traceable, overtly physical Catholic antecedent practice; and 3) this is a practice most easily recalled by local informants and, as an informant asserted, is reportedly still practiced even if by only a few to date.

The *erihya* of the "*kaputol*" expresses that:

Sa isang pamilya, ang pusod ng bawat batang inianak ay kinukuha't isinasabit sa ibabaw ng kalanan at pinauusukan hanggang sa matuyo. Kapag ang pinakahuling anak ay nariyan na't buo na ang magkakapatid, iyong mga pusod ng magkakapatid ay iniihaw at dinidikdik na parang pulbos at saka ibinubudbod sa nilugaw. Siyang ipinakakain ito sa magkakapatid. Di nila dapat malaman kung ano ang nasa nilugaw.

('Within a family, a portion of each child's umbilical cord is taken and hung over the stove and exposed to smoke until it dries out. As each new child is added to the family, so is his/her portion of the umbilical cord added. When the last child is born and the siblings are complete, the pieces of cord are then roasted and pounded into powder, which is then sprinkled over rice gruel. This is fed to each of the siblings. And they must not know what is in the gruel they are eating.')

This ritual is performed to assure the family that the bond among siblings will be strong. The symbolic bond is forged with the literal ingestion of pieces of the umbilical cord, even if it is to be noted that the ingestion itself is the symbolic joining within one person of the pieces of cord which is

originally conceived of as continuous, emanating from the one source that is the mother, and an indirect result of the union of the father and mother. That the children need not know what it is they are partaking of carries further the symbolism that such binding occurs not as a matter of conscious choice but as a matter of conscription, and at that, perpetrated at the levels of thought deeper than the conscious, and perpetrated as collective action cutting across generations, the older having the mandate to fulfill the act upon the succeeding generations.

The view may be taken that such a practice is indigenous, especially because of the rather 'heathen,' 'cannibalistic' outward form of the ritual that seems to pre-date colonial values, yet such an indigenous practice survives. If not the ritual itself, then at least the knowledge of this ritual apparently has survived well into the very late twentieth century, including in neighboring Imus (and former Silang territory), which is considered one of the most modernized towns of Cavite (L. Fajutagana, personal communication, April 1997).

What happens to the rest of each child's umbilical cord is as interesting: a part is buried beneath the soil where rain falls from the roof from spigots or from the eaves, at the spot that is also closest to the main doorway of the house. In so doing, the belief is that the child, even as an adult, will always make his way back home to his origins. The remaining parts of the cord are buried with the placenta, also at the foot of the stairway/doorway to the main house, accompanied by an item that shall represent the child's destined profession or character, as predetermined by the parents' wishes. For example, the child whom the parents want to be a scholar or teacher/person of letters will have a book and pencil buried along with the placenta. Though I was born in Bulacan, my maternal origins (also a Tagalog town, albeit in the Northern Tagalog Region, as differentiated from the Southern Tagalog Region in which is Silang) my paternal custom dictated that my birth be handled in the same way. I was told, long after I had become a disciple of the arts and letters and a practicing professional, that such a choice had been predestined for me. Somewhere in the grounds of the old house in Bulacan, my placenta is buried with a book and pencil, but my umbilical cord was buried in the grounds of the old house in Cavite, my birth in Bulacan having been considered as an unforeseen or accidental event occasioning my being 'away from home ground.' A dried part also of that cord had been kept and shown to me when I was in my teens. At that time, however, no mention was made of the ritual. I surmise that the cord part is still in my mother's keeping today. Given such a folklore-based notion of predestination, however, one cannot but consider modern psychology and

how nurturing as an input in the development of personality can likewise create self-fulfilling prophecies; then again, such nurturing is nonetheless grounded on the practitioners' cultural matrix of beliefs.

Birth seems to be a central motif in the Silang cultural paradigm considering many existing *erihya* surrounding it which are practiced, usually to the letter, to this day. This does not appear surprising at all, considering that the town is named Silang, which, based on folklore, means 'spontaneously born,' to account for its origin. Using the principle of binary oppositions, the fact that there are many *erihya* surrounding birth will similarly account for why there are roughly as many *erihya* surrounding the dead, death, and dying. However, it should likewise be noted that in Tagalog, "*silangan*," with two different stresses, means two different things: *silangan* with penultimate stress means 'east,' but pronounced with a final stress (*mabilis* in Tagalog) means 'birthing place'. In Silang, however, the two are linked and the literal sense of 'proper orientation' as one that is grounded on birth in the east refers to the town's very genesis (a town born where the sun is born), hence the value that operates for the circumstances of my own birth is that it is anomalous (to have been born out of town) and that 'something must be reoriented to make my grounding/moorings and own sense of orientation correct,' and for this, the rituals for sibling bonding and the placenta, earlier described, have been prescribed.

The survival of this kind of ritual may indicate that a mediation has already occurred between the indigenous ("pagan") and colonial (Catholic), such that religious concepts like the blood sacrifice of the Christ in both hagiography and its recall in the ritual of the Mass ("eat my body, drink my blood") or Iberian and Insular Romantic politico-military practices such as the blood compact, are perceived by the locals to have the same function as the ritual of "*kapatiran*" or the "*kaputol*." The recognition that certain values are constant despite differing outward representations and practice will in part explain why indigenous concepts like "*kaputol*" survived despite proselytization and conversion of natives to Catholicism. Conversely, this will explain why Catholicism was easily integrated into the native culture, in which, through an act of mediation transforming the moral paradigm, the phenomenon recognized as folk Catholicism came to exist.

The "*kapatiran*" or "*kaputol*" ritual transforms itself into other surface representations like the practices of "*palitbuhay*" (literally, 'a life for a life', or 'blood for blood', a rendering of the sacrificial scapegoat motif in local ritual), and the practice of bloodletting (over buried treasure).

Underlying all of these surface representations is the value put on blood ties and kinship relations. For example, the ritual of “*kaputol*” establishes the value that those of the same blood (family, especially those identified as brethren [more literally, siblings]) must be able to integrate within their subconscious and their daily practice the importance of strong family bonds by undergoing, usually without their knowledge, a ritual of binding. This ritual itself serves as the etymological explanation of the term “*kapatid*” or “*kaputol*” and its contracted, colloquial form “*utol*” (further pared down to “*tol*” in current Metro slang). These synonyms for ‘sibling’ are derived from the folk notion that siblings share a single umbilical cord which has been cut (*napatid/pinatid* or *naputol/pinutol*) at the birth of every succeeding sibling. Brothers and sisters are therefore ‘parts of a whole’ or ‘components of a set’ linked by the lifeline which is the umbilical cord—the very axis of existence that asserts a singular origin, a singular root, and in its unavoidable loss, replacement by the symbolic, but still significant locus of being: the umbilicus or navel.

In following the steps of this *erhiya*, the elders are assured that ties are not only kept strong at the vertical level (ascendancy and descendancy) but at the more critical lateral level. The vertical structure is less subject to stress because descendants and ascendants normally, naturally get to acknowledge their place in the ‘blood line,’ as there seems to be the assumption that the genealogy must have determined, for the sake of posterity, the order of succession ‘down the line.’ Historical, biographical, mythical, and even biblical tracts have incorporated such texts focused on the recitation of lineage as necessary to the establishment of identity according to the accepted order of things. However, social cohesiveness must also be assured, if not further strengthened, by acknowledging the lateral relationships which, as structure, is the more critical because deemphasized in favor of linear succession, but which is put through more stress constantly by sibling rivalry and other forms of competition, such as inheritance disputes and rivalry in social standing, or in love, etc.

As a clear example, the linear structure of ascendancy sees as an established function the inherent authority and superiority of the ascendant (a father, for instance) over the descendant (a son, for instance), thus, it is valued that filial obedience and assertions of the father over the son are but ‘in keeping with the natural order of things.’ Had the assertions of authority been from a sibling, birth order notwithstanding, this might be perceived as ‘not fully acceptable’ because not within the structure of functions which define the role of one sibling vis-à-vis another sibling. A younger sibling, for instance, who orders around another sibling, especially an older one, is seen

as behaving in a manner that creates tension between them, consequently putting some stress on the more tenuous lateral bond. I have asserted that the lateral level is a more critical level in the sense that ties between ascendant and descendant, such as parent and child, are more secure whereas ties among contemporaries of the same generation (the lateral level) appear to be more subject to crises and conflicts in the assertion of social places, such as pecking order, ‘among equals.’ The ritual of “*kaputol*” is perceived to act as a material expression that ensures the strengthening of such lateral bonds, especially as it is on various forms of union at the lateral level that the continuity of society depends, as illustrated by marriages and ritual kinship which more expectedly occur among social participants of the same generation or lateral level. Through “*kaputol*,” bonding at the lateral level is emphasized to assure society that the relationships of those who are connected laterally are in order and are perceived rightly.

Which ties are strongest or most privileged and which ties are the weakest? In Silang, a modification of the value of primacy and birth order is upheld in a manner that would further strengthen both lateral and linear ties into a unified function, as demonstrated by the belief that in the family, the oldest child (for illustration purposes designated as “A”) is “*matanda ang dugo*” (or literally, ‘has older blood’) as among the succeeding siblings (designated as B, C, D). This ‘older blood’ shall then mark the lineage of the eldest (A), so that among second generation cousins (designated as 1, 2, 3, 4) who came from the original first generation of siblings (A, B, C, D), the children of the eldest sibling (say, A-1 and A-2)—regardless of birth order among cousins (such as B-1 and C-2)—will be the ‘elder’ among the set of cousins who are the children of the other first generation siblings. Therefore, A-2 and A-3, children of A the eldest, who happen to be the second and third born in the order of siblings are still considered of older blood—and are thus addressed ritually and socially as “*ate*” or “*kuya*” (‘elder sister’, ‘elder brother’, respectively)—than the children of B (B, being the second born among the first generation) and the children of C (C being the third born among the first generation). This is enforced though physiologically and biologically, B’s child is the first born among the cousins, and the child of C is considered second in birth order among the cousins (Adoracion Vargas, personal communication, April 5, 1990; as later affirmed by Arlan Reyes, personal communication, June/July, 2004).

It is undeniable, however, that the belief and the ensuing practice exist alongside the larger Tagalog practice of recognizing seniority in the usual way, i.e., as indicated by simple birth order or biological age, within

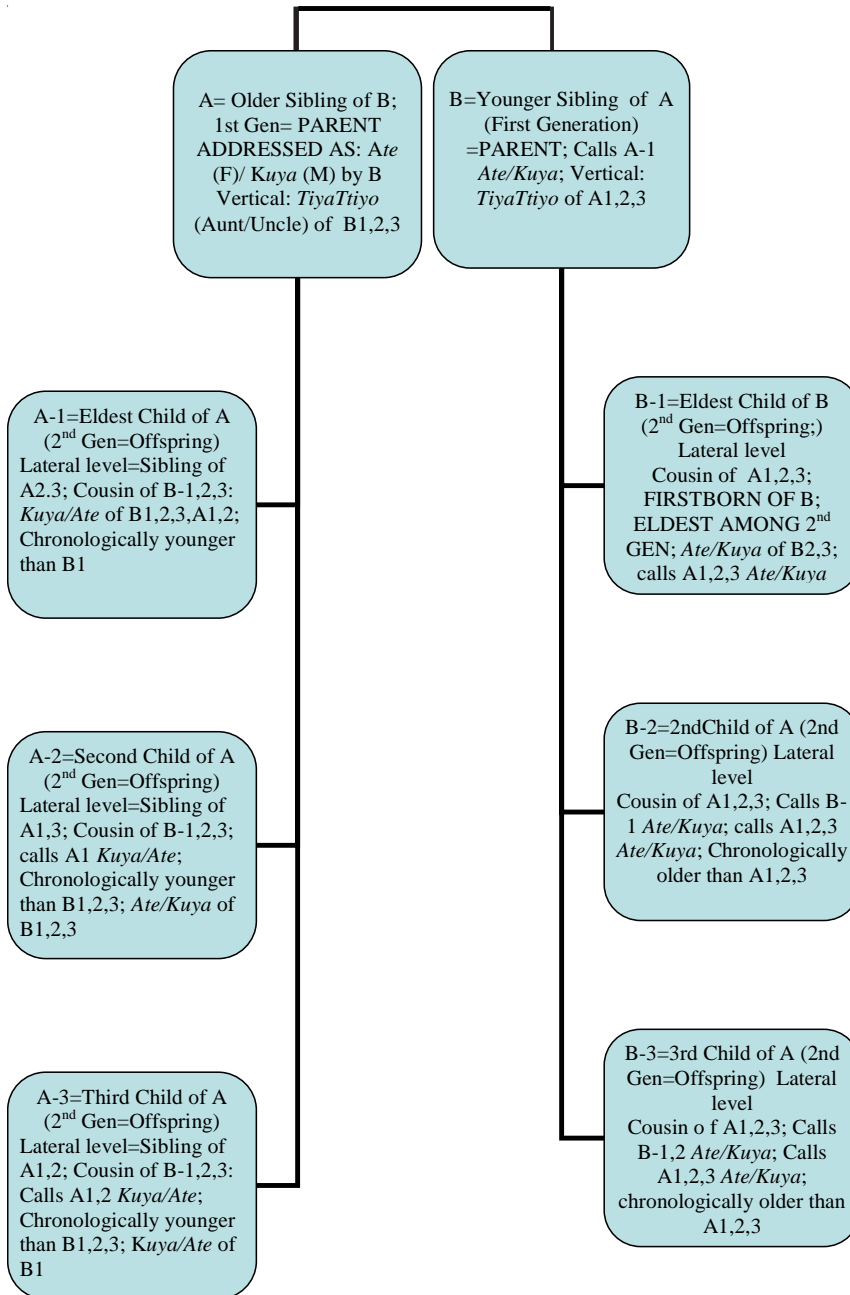


Figure 3: Illustration of parent, offspring, and lateral kinship (siblings and first-degree cousins) and Silang assignment of ritual epithet of *Kuya/Ate* (elder brother/ sister).

members of the same family status. Thus, in the greater Tagalog system, children of siblings and of their first-degree cousins will be considered of the same family ranking (degree) and, therefore, amongst the cousins of the generation, an order of primacy shall be reckoned according to birth order. However, in keeping also with the greater Tagalog practice, birth order or chronological age is discounted among members of a different family ranking (degree). Therefore, assuming that “A” is a member of third-degree ranking, i.e., he is the progeny of the previous second generation set, and if among the members of the first generation, a younger progeny “X” is born later than “A” and is designated as the youngest among the second generation, then “A” shall still address “X” as a senior, depending on the relationship, for example, “X” being addressed as aunt or uncle by “A”. It is apparent, therefore, that in Silang society, the existing convention is a modification of the greater Tagalog practice, whereby seniority is calculated based not only on intergenerational order or degree, but in an intragenerational order with members of the same degree creating a new system of ‘succession’/primacy among the succeeding descendants. For this reason, it could get pretty confusing as regards who is the senior or the younger in relation to another in an extended family setup (A. Reyes, personal communication, June/July 2004).

Thus does society, at the level of deep structures, provide values that prevent problems such as feuds or taboo relations, such as incest, between people of the same blood from manifesting at the surface level. As an extension of the value, it is to be observed that to date, other rituals with the same function of structuring society according to accepted roles and relations (as homologues) have been practiced along with succeeding transformations of, or substitutes (analogues) for the antecedent ritual of ingesting desiccated pieces of the umbilical cord. The *compadrazgo* system, seen as another ritual antedated by “*kaputol*,” eventually even became a substitute for “*kaputol*” in more contemporary times.

That kinship is a very important value in Silang comes out in practice as clannishness—a related concept of *tropa* (*Sp.*), *katropa* or *angkan*, *kaangkan*¹⁵. The concept of *katropa/tropa* is a local or small-scale manifestation of what Agoncillo considers as the Filipino trait of regionalism which, he asserts, is the least manifest among the Tagalogs (Agoncillo, 1990, pp. 13-14), but which will appear to be enhanced as a synchronic value among Caviteños, (p. 17) particularly among the upland populace, as opposed to the more historically ‘open’ and more early on cosmopolitanized cultures of the lowland Caviteños. On the diachronic axis, the positive manifestation of

brotherhood, clannishness or “Cavitismo” (Saulo & de Ocampo, xxiv, pp. 17-18) may be seen operating as early as the 1745 forerunner of the revolt on the friar estates (See Appendix for full details).

The recognition of concepts of the social structure and knowing one’s proper place in it, of social and other forms of exchange that are generated by this structure redounds to the recognition of concepts of deeply ingrained values, as shown by the many *erihya* illustrative of local socio-dynamics: in the recognition of superior or inferior, male and female, older and younger, and ascendant and descendant roles, in relationships such as family and marriage; in the predetermination of proper partnerships; in the relation of parent, child, and shaman demonstrated by the *erihya* of naming:

Bago pangalanan ang anak, ikonsulta muna sa maniningin ang napiling ‘alan.’

(‘Before naming the child, consult the shaman on the name that has been chosen’)

Also, in determining social and economic status through non-dogmatic baptism rituals; in establishing proximity of social relationships such as friend or foe, familiar or strange. And in *erihya* dealing with “*bales*”:

Huwag na huwag babati ng bata kapag ika’y galing sa arawan.

(‘Do not greet a child if you have just come in from the sun.’)¹⁶

As another illustration, the *erihya* prescribing to whom castaway clothes should go asserts a consciousness of inheritance only within kinship structures. Clothes should be given away only to relatives to ensure the keeping of good fortune within the family and to ensure good luck will be passed on to a relative. Giving away clothes to those whom one is unrelated to is frowned upon as a form of wanton prodigality, as this may result in letting go of the fortune ideally destined to the family; or worse, unknowingly passing on bad luck to the unrelated, who, because they might misunderstand the gesture, may nurse feelings of enmity and thus cause a rip in the social fabric. In the same ritual, a consciousness of status is also expressed in that good fortune must be kept for the enjoyment of the family and not for others. The determination of who gives what to whom and for what reason, is a cognizance of the structure of kinship involving oppositions between Self/others, Family/non-stranger, Familiar/stranger. The abovementioned

erihiiya serves furthermore to define relations and rules of transmission operating at the more cosmic level. For instance, hand-me-downs should never include clothes of the dead or mourning clothes, thereby creating a clear opposition between what is for the living and what is for the dead.

In related *erihiiya* dealing with death, the concept of kinship operates in such a way as to create clear distinctions and oppositions between Life/death, so much so that the value given the dead is the same value as the strange, unfamiliar, the non-participants in the structure. The *erihiiya* pertaining to death describe a breaking of ties, for instance, 1) by burning clothes of the dead and the surviving kin's mourning clothes; 2) by requiring children to cross over the coffin thrice; 3) by requiring the closest of kin never to act as pallbearers; or 4) by treating the departed more as a supernatural, and no longer a human being. The *erihiiya* means the following: 1) a burning of bridges literally, so much so that 'the dead cannot follow you' and 'you must not follow the dead,' the clothes symbolizing the 'bridge'; 2) the passage of the living and the dead into separate planes of existence; 3) a distancing so that the living kin does not literally go the same way as the deceased did (i.e., that kin may not follow suit and die); 4) in certain cases in which the dead, suspected to have been put in thrall, passes on to the supernatural world but leaves behind a 'dummy' corpse—the "*sakwa*" or banana plant's stem, respectively.

It may be said that the kinship structures, although recognized as still existing well beyond the death of a person, are best valued as severed, no longer operant, suspended, or transformed into a form of estrangement. Thus, the privileging of relationships among the living and the emphasis on the prevalence of the culture group are seen. *Erihiya* related to death and the supernatural show the common value that the concerns and the realm of the living are far removed from the realm of the supernatural, and pains must be taken to make the separation final. In addition, prescribed rituals must be performed in order to ensure that the two realms shall not overlap. In the event that the realms, events, and participants do overlap, there are again *erihiiya* that would effect the separation, remedy, and guard against these coincidences. The value given the living is expressed through the wariness by which the supernatural and the dead are regarded, and to the great lengths to which the people go in order to avoid situations leading to estrangement, separation (in actual life overtly expressed by *erihiiya* concerning marriage), death and its consequences, and other forms of involvement with the unexplained.

As a means of coping with such breaches in the social structure and between realms such as the living and the supernatural, a privileged position is given to the shamanic function performed by the *medico*, *manggagamot*, *albularyo*, or *manggagaway*, as s/he is called in the Silang vernacular. Given the role of mediator, it is s/he who bridges the gaps or helps participants bridge the gaps, thus reestablishing equilibrium between the natural and social order. At the literal, practical level, it is the shaman who is given the ability to straddle both worlds and to effect communication between the two. In this paradigm, the realm of the living (as represented by culture) and the realm of the supernatural (represented as intangible, unknown) find a common ground in nature in its uncultured or wild form.

It is thus in areas such as woods, caves, forests, rivers, and the like that the meeting of the living and the supernatural world occurs. As such, the value given to nature may be seen as ambivalent—nature as helper, as kind, as a source of bounty; or nature as destroyer, as malevolent, as a source of perdition. In the same manner, the local resident is portrayed in a mediated manner, so that the human being may be seen as a victim or a victimizer, steward or exploiter of creation. Therefore, depending on the local resident's relation with nature, the *erihya* prescribe what a person must do in order to either rectify the imbalance brought about by the improper way of relating to nature; or to maintain the proper relationship with nature.

Erihiya prescribe that people are not to go near rivers after rain unless they provide a *tau-tauhan*, a wooden icon or fetish resembling a human form. The explanation for this may be the fact that rivers are dangerous areas right after rains, and are likely to claim lives. The *tau-tauhan* becomes the mediator that literally acts as *palitbuhay* or the sacrificial offering of life in lieu of another. Note how, because of the coeval symbolic value served by both native icons like the *tau-tauhan* and Catholic icons and religious objects like crucifixes, the latter materials were readily adopted by the indigenous folk in lieu of the old forms which had either been burned or condemned as heretical. The adoption may be said to be one that serves the need at the level of surface function (an analogue), even as what may have actually occurred was also an adaptation of these Catholic forms to serve the deeper, function that the religious items must do as homologue of the *tau-tauhan*.

Just as the native *tau-tauhan* served as a form of protection (comparable to the universally established folkloric role of fetish)¹⁷, so do the Catholic artifacts serve to protect the locals from evil. As a very clear example, the crucifix may well be said to take on the function of *tau-tauhan*,

especially if we consider the fact that not only is the former used as a protection to ward off evil, but more significantly, it is a material symbol of what is considered the greatest Christian mystery, the life given for another life in the dogma of salvation. Instead of the *tau-tauhan*, other forms of amulets or sacrificial offerings of livestock or food may function as transformations in the *palitbuhay* ritual. The same concept of what is Proper/improper when relating to nature is extended to the identification through ritual of what areas are good for building houses in or what areas are taboo. Ultimately the concept of the real, which includes the cultural life and the supernatural life as mediated by nature, tends to clarify relations between nature and nurture (or culture).

In a similar light, play is defined by *erihya* as the function or means whereby children acquire culture, but in so acquiring this knowledge, these children as social participants are likely to transform this play into practice or into the real, whether during the stage of their life as children or as adults later on in life. Hence, some forms of play are considered taboo in so far as they may lead to the real, with dire consequences. Hence children are cautioned not to play at being dead or to replicate in play the rituals associated with dying.

Masamang maglaro nang nag-iyyak-iyakan o patay-patayan.

The consciousness of maintaining cultural harmony in the cultural paradigm is expressed through the symbolic use of media of exchange such as food; gifts such as clothes, knives, handkerchiefs, purses, footwear; and ceremonial objects such as tapers, matrimonial cords, rings, arrae, doves, chickens, *tau-tauhan*, *bulongs*, *oraciones*, saliva, etc. These media of exchange, taking on material form, enable the folks to overtly express the unconscious recognition of allowable and taboo family and social relations of exchange.

Food, for one, may be seen as a material transformation of specific relations of exchange. A relation of exchange which has a positive value is marriage. In *erihya*, such a relation of exchange is symbolized by the sharing of a sweet dish at the very onset of conjugal life, right after the matrimonial ties have been formalized. However, the refusal of food from a dead person manifested in a dream is a refusal to accept fellowship with the dead in a manner parallel to the relationship of the living, such as in the sharing of food. The same boundaries and relations are defined in the aforementioned *erihya* related to the use or treatment of clothes on the occasion of a death.

Moreover, knives representing a severance of ties or a wounding must never be given as gifts. Handkerchiefs which portend hardship and sorrow

(because sweat and tears are collected by these) and shoes which represent a parting of ways, must also never be considered as gifts to give, assuming that the objective of both the giver and receiver is to maintain as cordial a relationship as possible. However, should necessity dictate, the character of the transaction may be changed symbolically so that the instance and context of giving on the surface becomes not convivial but one of business. By requiring the receiver to symbolically give the giver a coin, the transaction takes on the nature of a business exchange, thereby revaluing the objects as things that are natural to give or take, if for a price, as in the context of trade. The relationship of exchange no longer built on the structure of exchange for the sake of friendship, the ultimately negative consequences of a taboo apparently broken are averted. Thus, it will be considered not wrong to give a handkerchief (which is presumably 'bought'), because the token fee makes the participants 'strangers' who do not have a 'relationship' to speak of that the exchange is capable of destroying.

The cultural reproduction of *erihya*

The *erihya* of Silang, though functioning at the synchronic level as significant values constitutive of the cultural paradigm, are also diachronically parole, each practice taking on various ways of presentation, each thought syntactically represented in a variety of utterances, every ritual having variations in each instance of performance. Then and up to the present, although local folks refer to the *erihya* as a body of lore, the *erihya* has largely remained inchoate, in the sense that beyond what this study has tried to achieve, no single repository, no existing and complete inventory of *erihya*, whether oral or written, is readily available.

Functioning diachronically as parole, because couched in free form (since, with the exception of the opening formula, the participant largely uses his own choice of words to express the *erihya*), *erihya* are recited or disseminated usually as the occasion or need arises. The sharing or expressing of *erihya* is usually part of a gradual process of indoctrination. New but mature members, usually incorporated through ties of affinity, become acculturated in phases as they encounter events or processes in the course of their now Silang-centered personal, family, and local history. Children of the locale learn through the process of enculturation. New and young members alike are taught the way of life, from birth to death. They also learn to perceive natural, supra- and supernatural phenomena through the set of significances established by the *erihya*. Participants who are considered "*tubong-Silang*" (native) are likewise provided opportunities to review or relearn the locale's values and way of life through reinforcement—constant

practice and constant sharing, constant articulation and constant reception—in ordinary situations such as daily exchanges between first and second generation parent and children, spouse and mate, friend and friend, individual and community during gatherings and events of special or critical significance—celebrations of rites and rituals surrounding births, passages, and other socioeconomic activities and transactions.

In this process of disseminating *erihya*, the first generation or elders in a three-generation set have the privileged function of acting as the repository of knowledge. It is they who are tasked to reveal the trove of information that they must pass on to the rest. In so performing this function, not only is the current structure of society made stable; the continuity of society through time is also assured. The *erihya* thus acts as a medium of exchange as well as the prescribed mechanics of this exchange that binds people in the social formation laterally and vertically in a given time and across time. The *erihya* as the collective expression of traditions is, in my reading, passed on as a ‘gift’—a gift of wisdom, a gift of destiny. Likewise, the *erihya* is the transmission process itself in which the participants, the setting, and the purpose are set, bringing people together. Because of *erihya*, systems of kinship and exchange are activated and perpetuated. In the same way that one’s encounter of reality and one’s experiences of life and attendant acts of giving these experiences meaning constitute a step-by-step journey, the learning of the *erihya* is never an isolated instance. The whole body of lore could not be learned in one sitting, as it is a compendium of knowledge.

The social structure is preserved because in the process of vertical transmission, people who are given prescription for how life should be lived in order to prevail, act accordingly. As a result, the old way of life is maintained, even if just at a symbolic level, as the coping mechanism of the present which either structures itself according to the time-honored sociocultural paradigm, or which, in its own time, finds new ways of mediating between old and new.

The *erihya* in present day Silang

This study, rather than assert that the Silang, Cavite people have a body of beliefs called *erihya*, simply asserts that the Silang folk have used a term in a manner unique to their local life. The existence of a mediated term is a signal that though Tagalog as a language is formed and operates according to the deep structures of Tagalog as a mother language of the culture group, Silang has operant dialect variations. In the same vein, from a structuralist

view, given a body of values and customs seen as common to all those belonging to the Tagalog culture group,¹⁸ Silang likely has its own modifications in the practice and valuation of these. In this difference lies the definition of its local character and ethos. The creation and use of a transformed term to refer to an equally transformed or mediated body of beliefs are just surface representations that allow Silang folk to distinguish themselves as a formation that, though belonging to a greater culture group with which it generally shares something in common social structures, has its own localisms which make it distinctive as a 'pocket' within a greater culture area. The *erihya* becomes a significant function that signals to Silang folk that such a common system has been altered in a smaller, special way to best suit the needs of local practitioners. The *erihya* is a tool of mediation that allows Silang folk to make sense of the actual reality confronting them, even as it allows them to see their place within a greater Tagalog cultural context and assert at the same time their uniqueness, as well as belonging.

Endnotes

¹For a more detailed description of the research situ and its history, see the Appendix.

²It might be of interest to literary scholars today that a recent reprinting of sections of Claude Levi-Strauss' seminal work, as incorporated in volumes and journals on Structural Linguistics was made in the 2000s by the Cambridge University Press (England). Annotations on the rationale behind the reprinting of such indicate resurgence in the academic interest and scholarship based on Structuralism. Especially within this local University of the Philippines context, the demonstration of the applicability of such a critical perspective not popularly used even in its heyday can help breach the gaps among the praxology of approaches to literary criticism and therefore allow for the establishment of a continuum in the literary history of local scholarship, including the complete laying down of a structural groundwork for the corpus of material on Silang folklore. For it is only upon the establishment of a thoroughly framed base of interpretation do I feel that work on rereading and interrogating such a structure, toward the establishment of other reappropriated meanings, can proceed with methodical deliberateness.

³*Vocabulario de la lengua Tagala*, Manila 1860 (Reprinted); Mcf 7468, UP Manila Library Collection. The book asserts itself as a lexical standard for Tagalog. Since Fr. Juan Jose

Noceda was the rector of the Jesuit residence in Silang from 1725-1730 and from 1734-1740, ultimately retiring and dying in Silang in 1747, it would be interesting to compare vocabulary items which could perhaps be traced to Silang local usage versus the usage of all other words coming from other Tagalog cultures to see which of the recorded words are still in usage in present-day Silang not only orthographically but also with respect to meaning; and to trace evolutions/changes in both areas. Moreover, the dictionary records certain practices, proverbs, and similar folklore items. Teodoro Agoncillo refers to his work on Tagalog and foreign influences on the language in “Our National Language” (Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 1990, p. 589) as a reference to help trace the interplay of indigenous and colonial linguistic elements in the development of a national language.

⁴One of the earliest Tagalog lexicons to be created, Frs. Noceda and Sanlucar’s *Vocabulario de la lengua Tagala*, does not contain the word “*erehiya*” as among its entries (Panganiban, 1972, p. 407ff; see also Institute of National Language, 1964).

⁵When asked to explain the etymology of the word *erihia*, all informants from Silang could come up with no possible explanation as regards the word’s beginning or source (etymology). As a matter of fact, though informants were quick to answer whenever I asked them what the word meant to the folks, or in what context it is used in the locale, they found it rather strange that I should still ask them to explain the word’s possible origin, inasmuch as they think that such a word that exists as a given in their daily life need not be traced to a source. It is the view of most senior informants from Silang that (in keeping with what perhaps could be the concept of a godhead) the word did not originate from anything, for such an apparently common, generally accepted, and functional word is in itself the original form or the root; it is something that has been there from the time they acquired a consciousness of their world and of reality. The word has become part of their lexicon, it simply is.

⁶Apparently, the term “*erihia*” is recognized in Indang (with an informant clarifying that, to his knowledge, the spelling of the word is “*erehiya*” with stress falling on the third syllable). The source acknowledges, however, that according to his elders, “*erihia*” is seen as something part of the old folks’ way of life, and is a practice which he has heard of as “being more prevalent in Silang than in their town (H. Novero, personal communication, March 2, 1997).”

⁷This paper uses the variant, *erihia*, instead of the form prescribed by the lexicons consulted: *herejia*. In spite of standards set by orthography, the first variant is the spelling most commonly produced and used by informants, and this is consistent with pronunciation since in Spanish words the initial ‘h’ is silent/not articulated. For Tagalog linguistic standards, cf. Subido and Mendoza, 1940, p. 3; Ramos, 1971; and Schacter and Otones, 1972.

⁸It is interesting to note, however, that such lexis and meaning appear not to be incorporated as part of modern and even contemporary usage. In the metropolitan areas of

Manila, Philippines, for instance, hardly—if not at all—does the usage crop up as part of conversational use. However, it should also be noted that there are scholarly positions that create distinctions among the language variants known as “Filipino”/the “national language,” “classic” Tagalog as a regional language, and “Metro Manila Tagalog” as a lingua franca.

⁹For a detailed description of pre-colonial culture the impact of colonization on socio-cultural life and the resulting modifications, see Agoncillo (1990, pp. 20-101).

¹⁰Based on Damiana Eugenio’s extensive study of folklore (1982), it is clearly seen that distinctions do exist in both form and function, say, among elements in the set of *kasabihan*, *salawikain* or *kawikaan* (proverbs), and the set of *bugtong* or *palaisipan* (riddles or puzzles), and more so, distinctions exist between these two sets of folk speech types.

¹¹Here, note the Silang dialect operating in both the elided pronunciation and spelling of the Standard Tagalog “*lamang*.”

¹²The yield of this study was initially a listing of 192 *erhiya* items in the vernacular, excluding variants. Including variants, the items numbered 218 initially, and later, with an additional 31 new items and with 5 variants in this new set, the collection now has a total of 249 items, which were catalogued and given free translations in English and with annotations. This corpus cannot be said to be comprehensive, as it seems to me that even at this preliminary stage of the study, the *erhiya* presents itself to be an extensive body of lore which touches all aspects of life in Silang society. Formally, the study began when, from 1989-1998, I acted as participant observer in many of the events during which *erhiya* were practiced. Data were also gathered by interviewing key informants who generally were validated by living ascendants and descendants, and who, with the informants, constituted a three-generation set. Well before and after this period, immersion and informal data gathering took place, and still continues to date.

¹³There is difficulty in establishing whether certain *erhiya* pertaining to the play of children should be classified according to the stage in their life cycle (i.e., under children or childhood, inasmuch as children are supposed to be the most characteristic and involved participants in the area of play); according to the symbolic value such as death (for instance, because of the shape and material of the *sungkaan*—wood and coffin-like, both representative of mortality—and because of the dynamics of its play—devouring, burning out a house, petering out—is supposed to bring bad luck, occasioning fire or death when the game board [*sungkaan*] is kept at home); or according to the overt subjects they belong to (i.e., to classify the *erhiya* on *sungkaan* under household implements and artifacts or under the subject “house” because its play brings up many references to “*bahay*” and it is a household object). The difficulties encountered in classification are not limited to the cited example, but rather pose a general concern in the treatment of all the collected utterances.

¹⁴Using mathematical principles (the Cartesian coordinate system itself being what Structuralism considers a model paradigm) the positive prescription, “*Ang sabi ng*

matatanda” added to the negative, paired expression, “*huwag na huwag/bawal* (caution) + at *baka* (consequence)” yields the mathematical value $(+) + ([-]) + [-] = +$, whereby the sum of two negatives results in a positive value, and the sum of two positive values results in an overall positive value. In a more simple equation, two negative values like “*nakow...huwag* $(-)$ + ‘*baka* $(-)$ ’ create a positive value diagrammed as $(-) + (-) = +$. This explains why surface structures with apparently negative expressions/cautions result in deep structures that have a positive value.

¹⁵It is of interest to note that the existing, recognized, and only organization of the University of the Philippines, Diliman’s Cavite-based students is called “*Angkan*. ”

¹⁶The term *bales* escapes translation into English for me. In the Silang Tagalog variant, *bales* is the lexis for the general Tagalog terms “*usug/usog*,” the pair being also variants of a lexical item in the culture, though in Silang, the pronunciation and form is more of “*usog*.” Both *bales/usog* are terms used interchangeably in Silang; but *bales*, just like the word “*eribiya*” has an added local connotation. It is recognized in Silang that those with “innate power” who do not necessarily derive such from the sun or from strangeness/superiority are also termed as “*mambabales*.” *Bales* operates in Silang in a way that one can, without his/her conscious control cause, or as a child be victim of, *bales* when it is not only daytime (as in general Tagalog belief) but also at dusk or late in the evening, thus eliminating the ‘transmitted heat of the sun’ as the source of illness/power. Personally, my now deceased father and I have been identified within the smaller circles of the Silang community as having the ‘curse,’ labeled as “*nakakabales/malakas makabales*,” which in this case, is somewhat like someone who casts a spell on children. One is considered ‘born’ a *mambabales*, and the ‘power’ is inherited. The remedy against this unwanted ‘power’ being the ritual anointing of the soles and forehead of a child with one’s saliva to prevent its becoming a victim. In Cavite, for *bales/usog* to happen, the genders of both *mambabales/nakabales* and the *nabales* are irrelevant, but age and kinship relation are (Always, it is the older that causes *bales* upon the younger, the stranger upon the familiar child (or the reverse, the familiar local upon the strange child). In this case, the distance or proximity of the kinship relation becomes the defining factor to delineate ‘estrangement’ from the child. The *bales* and the *mambabales/nakabales* are also not appropriately translated as spell and spellbinder respectively, since the local Silang equivalent for this is “*manggagaway/nagaway/magaway*.” (The latter terms are also used in neighboring Imus).

¹⁷Consider also the *anito* of greater Philippine pre-colonial (and in some Mountain Province cultures still a present) culture in which a similar function and form as that of the *tau-tauhan* are operant. I am inclined to take the position that *tau-tauhan* may be an evolution or diachronic transformation of the *anito* (Cf Agoncillo, 1990, pp. 44-49), in some cases, at just the surface level of lexis and physical form, even as the deep structure of function remains constant. Consider also transformations in terminology and physical form, but consistency of function such as those of *anting-anting*, *galing* or *agimat* (terms for “amulet”; cf Agoncillo, 1990, pp. 44-49). Another lead to pursue in exploring the *tau-tauhan* and its function has to do with archaeological evidence found in certain sites in the

Philippines of what appear to be literally heaps of earthen/clay anthropomorphic images found in a cave, which have parts resembling human heads and faces, but whose bodies appear to be less defined, like jars. They may likely have had a ritual significance in death and burial customs of ancient Filipinos (Kathrina Esteves, personal communication, March 1, 2008) [Cf. Egyptian *ushabtis*].

¹⁸For a more detailed description of the Tagalog people and Tagalog culture, and comparison of this group with the other Philippine regional peoples and cultures, with suggested and annotated primary sources on further similar discussions, see Agoncillo (1990), pages 1 to 66 and 588 to 592. Note, however that further discussion beyond Agoncillo's framing is merited to account for diachronic movement as redefining and reframing the sense and value of region and ethos in contemporary Philippines.

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Appendix

Historical Profile of Silang

Indisputably one of the oldest towns of the province, the town of Silang began as a Franciscan mission established on a portion of the *encomienda* of Diego Jorge de Villalobos, with the permission of Fray Christobal de Salvatierra. Silang nevertheless has four unresolved founding dates, each marking the onset of Spanish administration: 1571 according to municipal records; 1575 according to education authorities; 1585 according to the Imus Diocese; and 1595 according to the local church authorities (Saulo & De Ocampo, 1985, p. 264). In addition to these, there are two folkloric accounts of the town's pre-colonial founding: one, by Bornean *datus*, which the locals give much credence to as historical fact; and the other, its spontaneous generation, beginning with a church that was 'born.' The Spanish influence on Silang could be traced to the earliest asserted founding year, or to any of the subsequent founding dates that nonetheless fall well within the period of early colonization. Despite confusion of such dates, it is without doubt that Silang is one of the earliest Philippine towns to be so constituted as an administrative area by the *Conquistadores*.

From 1585 until 1598, when the taking of Spain ordered that the Philippines be divided systematically into distinct territories, the town remained under the ministry of the Franciscans. (Riego de Dios, 1981, p.14; Saulo & De Ocampo, 1985, p. 266). On May 5, 1599, Silang was transferred to the Jesuits because the Franciscans had resigned the mission. When the Jesuits arrived in 1601, one-third of the total area of the province of Cavite

belonged to Silang (Riego de Dios, 1981, p. 24). The Silang church was later built by Fr. Juan Salazar in 1634 and it was in 1640 that the statue of the Nuestra Señora de Candelaria was installed in the church (Saulo & De Ocampo, p. 266; Riego de Dios, p. 14).

In 1599, what would become the towns of Amadeo, Yndan (now Indang), Mendez (then a *sitio* of Yndan), Bailen (now General Aguinaldo), and Tagaytay were territories belonging to the town of Silang. Likewise, Rosario, which was then a part of General Trias; Alfonso; Magallanes; Naic, which was then a part of Maragondon, were all part of General Silang (Baterina, p. 30). The only other towns of Cavite then were Cavite el Viejo (now Kawit), Cavite City, Noveleta, and Imus. Dasmariñas was a *sitio* of Imus, and Bacoar was then part of Parañaque. Indang became an independent town 70 years after Silang was founded whereas Amadeo and Carmona were remanded to Silang in 1901 and 1902, respectively, but these towns later regained their autonomy.¹⁹ In 1629, the residents of Silang fell into a dispute with the Dominican *hacienda* of Biñan over the sale of land. The dispute remained unresolved, culminating in the revolt of 1745 (Roth, 1977, p. 102). The people of Silang, led by Joseph de la Vega, who acted as General, forged alliances with fellow Tagalogs from Tondo; Parañaque; Hagonoy; various towns of Cavite, including Bacoar; and various towns of Pampanga, causing the revolt to spread (Roth, p. 102). On May 21, 1745, Pedro Calderon y Enriquez, a Royal Audiencia judge, was given the commission to deal with the rebellion. Ready to use force at first, Calderon adopted a conciliatory stance after reviewing the case. He had the land resurveyed and re-titled. The revolt ended in June 1748 (Blair & Robertson, 1973, LXVII 28, p. 30-32). King Ferdinand IV sold the disputed lands to the people of Silang for 2,000 Mexican pesos payable in three installments from 1747 to 1748. The document of sale was signed by Don Calderon and Don Alejo de Avila, representing the Spanish government, and Don Bernabe Javier Manahan and Don Gervasio de la Cruz, local Silang residents, representing the people.

[In a recent interview conducted by Rex Balthazar Moya, a student undertaking research for his undergraduate thesis on local history, of informant Antolin Gemanil, a retired professor and Silang Cavite Historical Society member, it appears that Gemanil is of the opinion that local histories of Silang that assert a founding date only within the reckoning of colonial chronology are in error. The interviewed source prefers to have the actual date of the founding of Silang reckoned according to the folkloric account set in pre-colonial times. Such a view has not yet been verified as an official view espoused and shared by the Society as a whole, especially as Gemanil points out that the recently published book on the parish of Silang, by Teresita Unabia (*Silang Kasaysayan at Pananampalataya* 2000), a co-member of the Silang Historical Society, “is in error” in so recording the foundation date of the parish as based on colonial history (Rex Balthazar Moya, personal communication, May 2004). It should be noted that the work by Unabia referred to is apparently the latest publication on the local history of Silang, even as my MA thesis, “A Structural Study of Selected Tales from

Silang, Cavite, (March 1991),” which includes in its appendix a comprehensive local history account of Silang, and from which this study, “Utol...” takes off, antedates Unabia by some ten years. It should also be noted that a bound copy of the thesis was left in the Society’s keeping, under the stewardship of Florendo Bejosano, Silang municipal secretary, by the late Baltazar Moya sometime in the mid- to latter 1990s upon the request of the office, in view of a publication project given the approval of the Provincial Governor, Juanito Remulla, himself. A change of administration due to the ending of respective terms, however, preempted publication. This thesis has since been in the Society’s possession, albeit unacknowledged by it, especially as Baltazar Moya had already passed away in 1999. This does not appear to be among the bibliography listing of sources in Unabia’s work.]

The reaction of Gemanil that reasserts a pre-colonial rather than a postcolonial origin of the town proves to be worthy of study, pointing to a possible underlying, albeit still unacknowledged, and valuable— because possibly shared— act of recovery and reappropriation: a postcolonial response as it were. In fact, such research access points to the next level of critical inquiry this study on the topic should take, which admittedly necessitates first the laying down of a structural groundwork for eventual deconstructive readings. See *The Tropa’s Tropes (Recovering Meaning and Identity from the Vernacular)* as the germinal study of such (Torrecampo, March 2005).]

The Jesuits remained in Silang until 1768. Care of the parish went to the Filipino secular priests who stayed on until 1849, when Silang was remanded to the Augustinian Recollects who stayed on until 1898 (Saulo & De Ocampo, 1985, p. 261) In the early months of 1896, one of Silang’s leaders, *Kapitan* Vito Belarmino, received anonymous letters called *cartes volantes*, which intimated a revolt. September 2, 1896 marked the first real battle between the revolutionaries and the Civil Guards. On the third day of battle, the Civil Guards surrendered. Silang was now under the control of the revolutionary government which looked to Emilio Aguinaldo as its head. The town adopted the revolutionary name of Sumilang and was made part of the second Magdalo Zone of Cavite (Saulo & De Ocampo, 1985, p. 244).

Determined to quell the revolt in Silang, the Spanish government had sent troops to launch an offensive as early as September 7, 1896; but Silang revolutionaries kept the territory until, unable to withstand the second juggernaut commissioned by Gov. Camilo Polavieja, Silang fell on February 18, 1897 (Sison, Ambalada and Belamide transcripts). Though Emilio Aguinaldo and Andres Bonifacio personally led launched and led a counteroffensive, historic for being the first join attack by the rival Magdalo and Magdiwang factions, the attempt to regain the town failed. It was only in June 1898 that local revolutionaries led by Lazaro Quiamzon were able to retake the town (Sison).

The first detachment of American soldiers entered Silang on June 6, 1900, not without any resistance from the local residents. The local troops, unable to withstand

superior firepower, did not prevail. (Ambalada, trans by Pascual, 1940, D). Civil government under American sovereignty was established in Cavite on June 11, 1901. Silang, under Public Act No. 947 reducing the municipalities of Cavite from 22 to nine, reabsorbed Amadeo and Carmona (Fernandez & Zafra, 1924, p. 44; Saulo & De Ocampo, 1985, p. 266).

After World War II broke out in December 1941, Japanese invaders occupied Silang early in January, instituting an economic blockade, zoning systems, and other forms of Japanese imperial control upon the Silang populace. As a reaction to the occupation, local Caviteño guerilla organizations were formed, among them Erni's Unit, the Castañeda unit which later grew into the Fil-American Cavite Guerilla Force (FACGF) under General Mariano Castañeda; and the Marking's Fil-American Irregular Troops (Bureau of Public Schools [BPS], 1953, pp. 6-7).

The FACGF's 32nd Infantry Regiment Commanded by Lt. Col. Dominador Kiamzon of Silang was tasked to defend the town which was marked by the American authorities as one of the towns within the battle sector. Within 48 hours, the eastern part of Cavite was successfully liberated (Saulo & De Ocampo, 1985, pp. 42-48). Civil government was established in Silang on February 7, 1945.

Sometime between the 1950s and the 1960s, Cavite's peace and order situation became critical. Banditry, highway robbery, cattle rustling, murder, as well as political feuds were rife (Tutay, 1959, pp. 6, 62). Because it was a part of Cavite, Silang was naturally tainted by such a reputation, even if only a few local names, of minor importance, could be associated with such notoriety. By April 20, 1954, Silang, along with the towns of Imus, Maragondon, Bailen, Indang, Magallanes, General Trias, Ternate, Naic, Rosario, and Tanza, was placed under the Philippine Constabulary's control. These towns were tagged as prime potential hot spots especially during elections (Tutay, 1959, pp. 6, 62).

In 1947, general labor unrest was escalating in Central Luzon but Cavite in general, and Silang in particular, were unaffected by the Huk problem (Faylona, 1947, p. 45; Riego de Dios, 1981, p. 44).

By 1952, newly constructed houses and old houses which were being modernized and renovated marked the change in Silang's skyline (BPS, 1953, pp. 8-10). This trend continues to the present, although it is interesting to note that aside from minor structural repairs, the church, along with the old houses traditionally belonging to the *principales* and which surround the town square, remain, generally unchanged.²⁰

In 1969, Silang was already a town made up of 34 *barrios*, a structuring which was maintained until the early 1990s. However, as of 2004, the town, although it had not grown in area, had its internal subdivisions modified so that it is now town made up of 64

barrios and *barangays* (Municipal Development Plan 2000 CD-ROM). Tubuan, once a single administrative division, was divided to constitute Tubuan I, II and III; San Vicente was divided into San Vicente I and II; San Miguel was divided as San Miguel 1 and II. Formerly, San Miguel and San Vicente were just names for what were identified as the *barangays* of the Poblacion. Now, apart from the addition of San Vicente 1, II and San Miguel 1 and II as separate *barrios*, *Barangay* I, II, III, IV, and V also demarcate the subdivisions of the Poblacion area. Narra I, II and III now exist; Hoyo was divided as Hoyo I and II; Yakal, Toldeo; Narra I, II, III; Lalaan II, Ipil I and II; Acacia, Anahaw I, II, and Banaba are also among the recent additions to the old administrative divisions (Municipal Development Plan 2000).

Silang, which officially celebrated the 400th anniversary of its founding in 1985 (based on local decision, in their legislating a preferred date from among one of the founding dates), is now emerging as among the centers of commerce in upland Cavite. Although still classified as an agricultural community, the shift from agriculture is evident. However, the majority of residents still rely on the land for economic sustenance (Saulo & De Ocampo, 1985, p. 264). Residents are currently engaged in raising coconuts; pineapples; ornamental plants; other fruit-bearing trees and plants such as bananas, plantains, pawpaws (locally known as *papaya*), sweetsop (*atis*, as locally termed), soursop (*guyabano* in the vernacular), alligator pears (otherwise called *avocado* locally), jackfruit, and other cash crops such as cassava, corn and peanuts. All of these have long been considered as the more traditional produce of the town. Sometime during the seventies to the eighties, the majority of the landowners shifted from rice or coconut cropping and copra production to coffee growing, which remains at present as the main produce of Silang.

Residents, traditionally involved in farming, are also currently enjoying good financial returns from local agribusiness ventures, primarily from poultry and livestock, vegetable, ornamental plants, and cut-flower raising; from local commerce such as restaurant operations, the sale of souvenirs and native delicacies and produce including coffee, honey, and *lambanog* (coconut sap wine) to both local and foreign tourists who inevitably pass through Silang to and from Tagaytay and other coastal spots in Bantangas; and from the high resale or lease value of prime residential, commercial, and agro-industrial real estate in the locale, which have been earmarked for development not only by small, local businessmen but by big national and multinational corporations.

Sometime in the early 1900s a local landmark, Pasong Pajo, found between Barrio Tubuan and *Barrio Iba*, historic for its being the scene of one of the bloodiest local battles between Spanish and Katipunero forces, was unfortunately filled up, buried and leveled off to become part of a local landowner's subdivision project.

Between the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the church underwent minor repairs on its belfry, which was restored to its original height prior to destruction by fire in the early

1800s. The buttresses that historically identified the Silang Church to have been a fort as well, were also strengthened against weathering and modified to allow passage to the convent, and to the inner catacombs where the remains of past personages of the church, including the locally renowned Father Donahue, lie. The public is not allowed access to the catacombs.

[In the latter half of 2004, while ongoing road upgrading encroached on the Silang Plaza steps, which form the outer boundaries of the Silang Church (the plaza having been built on erstwhile church property), the term of construction workers unearthed 11 skeletons that were so fragile these mostly crumbled upon exposure, save for one. The rest were unfortunately disposed of unceremoniously in a sack, for the workers' want of proper instruction at that time. All remains, after their initial discovery, were also as unfortunately disturbed from their original placement site, which was marked by what appeared to be an arching brick enclosure. This complicated subsequent anthropological analysis, given the destruction of evidence. The remains of the one intact skull, left for the inspection by a UP team of anthropologists, proved to be female, as physiologically indicated by the absence of eyebrow ridges in the skull (R. Moya, personal communication, May 2004; on-site inspection and in attendance at the public conference on the findings].

With the nineties came developments such as the *Riviera*, an exclusive golf and country club development in *Barrio* Bulihan. The area it occupies was once a stretch of both raw land and farms. In a part of the former raw land is a cave with a pool and a river running through it. Several folklore beliefs and stories surround the spot. This site is now one of the attractions of the club. In *Barrios* Bulihan and Tartaria, big real estate development firms have built subdivisions. Alongside these construction projects are other smaller commercial housing, hostelry, and resort developments set up by certain locals.

The municipal hall, a landmark also because it has stood in its original state since early times, was reengineered in the late 1990s to the early 2000s, resulting in more contemporary upgrades in facilities and a more current look to its facade.

Silang, a town within the greater Tagalog province, has remained predominantly Catholic despite the many different faiths and religions that have eventually founded their respective practices and churches within the town's environs. The town, with its massive stone church as the focal point of the town *plaza*, is consecrated to the patroness, the Nuestra Señora Virgen de Candelaria. Silang's town fiesta has always been and continues to be a big celebration. The main celebration coinciding with the feast of the patroness, the *fiesta* itself is celebrated for three days, from the eve up to the third day, which is called *altares* by the locals. So called because traditionally, larger-than-life *retablos*, arbitrarily referred to by the locals as "*altar*" (hence, the vernacular, plural form "*altares*," a pluralization mechanics obviously still based on the Spanish system) were built outside the church, and which were modeled after the actual plaster tableaux found inside the church. The celebration outdoors

revolved around these models. Although the term “*altares*” continues to mean such a celebration, it had been decades since the last outdoor ‘altar’ was built.

The biggest issues in Silang in the early nineties were the proposed conversion of Barrio Paligawan to a refuse dumpsite for Metro Manila; certain land conversion propositions regarding the First Cavite Industrial Estate, which included *Barrio* Bulihan as part of its project area; and the CALABARZON Project’s designation of areas for industrialization. These issues were addressed by people through their socio-civic organizations that aired the people’s views regarding their determination to preserve the immanent domain of what they all have come to know as their true home. To date, action on such proposed project seems to have been suspended in an apparent affirmation of the local folks’ assertion of their identity and their patrimony.

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